



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

Fish and Wildlife Service

For release: August 2, 1993

Spence Conley (413) 253-8328
Patricia W. Fisher (202) 208-5634

GREENLAND COMMERCIAL SALMON BUYOUT WILL BOOST ATLANTIC SALMON RECOVERY ON CONNECTICUT RIVER, OTHER NEW ENGLAND RIVERS

An historic agreement to suspend the commercial fishery for wild Atlantic salmon in the North Atlantic, long believed to be the primary obstacle to successful restoration of the species to its traditional rivers of New England, has been signed by negotiators for worldwide salmon conservation interests and representatives from the island of Greenland.

The 5-year agreement, completed in complex negotiations earlier this summer, was recently announced by Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt and Amos S. Eno, executive director of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (Foundation), who spearheaded the negotiations.

Secretary Babbitt joined Senator Joseph Lieberman (D-Connecticut) at an August 1 press conference in Essex, Connecticut, called to focus public attention on the Connecticut River and the new Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge. The Secretary hailed the vanguard agreement as a "shot in the arm for the Atlantic salmon recovery effort."

"This unique, cooperative approach to eco-region management should go a long way towards bringing back a once-abundant recreational fishery," Secretary Babbitt said.

Lieberman, who wrote the legislation creating the new Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge to protect the considerable natural resource values of the Connecticut River Basin, noted the agreement will allow an estimated additional 140,000 mature salmon to return to native rivers in the United States (including the Down East rivers of Maine, the Connecticut, and the Merrimack), Canada, and Northern Europe.

(over)

Secretary Babbitt said that for years the Interior Department, through the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and others, has been working to restore historic salmon runs to these river systems. Progress has been slow despite efforts at stocking, habitat conservation, predator control, and providing safe fish passage both upstream and downstream through various hydroelectric facilities.

"The salmon recovery effort in the Northeast has been a major challenge," Secretary Babbitt said. "Today's action by the Foundation and its partners is a tremendous example of how we all can work together to protect our common natural resources. What takes place on the high seas off the coast of one country can have a direct impact on the rivers of another."

"It's possible that this agreement will do as much in five years," predicted Lieberman, "as has been done in the previous 20."

Eno, who directed the Foundation's role in the negotiation process, said the key players included the Foundation, the North Atlantic Salmon Fund, the Atlantic Salmon Federation, the Association of Hunters and Fishermen of Greenland (KNAPK), and the Greenland Home Rule Government, with additional financial support from the U.S. Department of State.

The two phases of the agreement provide that all commercial salmon harvests off Greenland be suspended during 1993 and 1994, with subsistence fishing by native Greenlanders still permitted; and that negotiations will resume in 1995 for the remaining 3 years of the agreement.

In return, Greenland will be compensated for its loss of commercial salmon revenues. Payment will be \$400,000 for the first year, and \$400,000 for the second, with another \$50,000 to be paid at the start of negotiations for the second phase.

Another aspect of the agreement, which Eno hopes will become permanent, calls for cooperative research among the Foundation, the State Department and the KNAPK to find long-term alternative economic opportunities for salmon fisherman.

Eno said the agreement will put substantial income into the hands of Greenland's fishermen, who have few economic alternatives in a life dependent upon harvest of natural resources.

(more)

"The Greenlanders deserve credit for making this historic agreement and demonstrating the importance of protecting the world's natural resources," Eno said. "Special praise also goes to Orri Vigfusson, who, for the last three years, has led the negotiations for conservation interests."

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation is a non-profit organization based in Washington, DC, dedicated to the conservation of natural resources.

The Foundation was established in 1984 by Congress. Among its goals are habitat protection, natural resource management, and ecosystem restoration. It has undertaken more than 700 projects generating more than \$85 million for fish and wildlife programs.